

CARSON CITY NEVADA



enVISION
CARSON CITY

master plan

MAY 2025

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

PLAN OVERVIEW

MASTER PLAN BASICS

This Master Plan is an officially adopted document that outlines Carson City's vision and goals for the future and provides guidance for elected and appointed officials in making decisions regarding the long-range needs of the community. The guiding principles, goals, policies, and recommended actions, in combination with the Land Use Map, provide guidance for decisions affecting growth, the use and development of land, preservation of open space, and the expansion of public facilities and services. The Master Plan consists of both policies and maps, which should be used together when making decisions. This document shall be reviewed annually at a public hearing and revised as needed to reflect the availability of new implementation tools, changes in state and federal law, changes in funding sources, changes to the Urban Services Boundary, the effectiveness of existing policies, the impacts of past decisions, and other changes in the community.

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN?

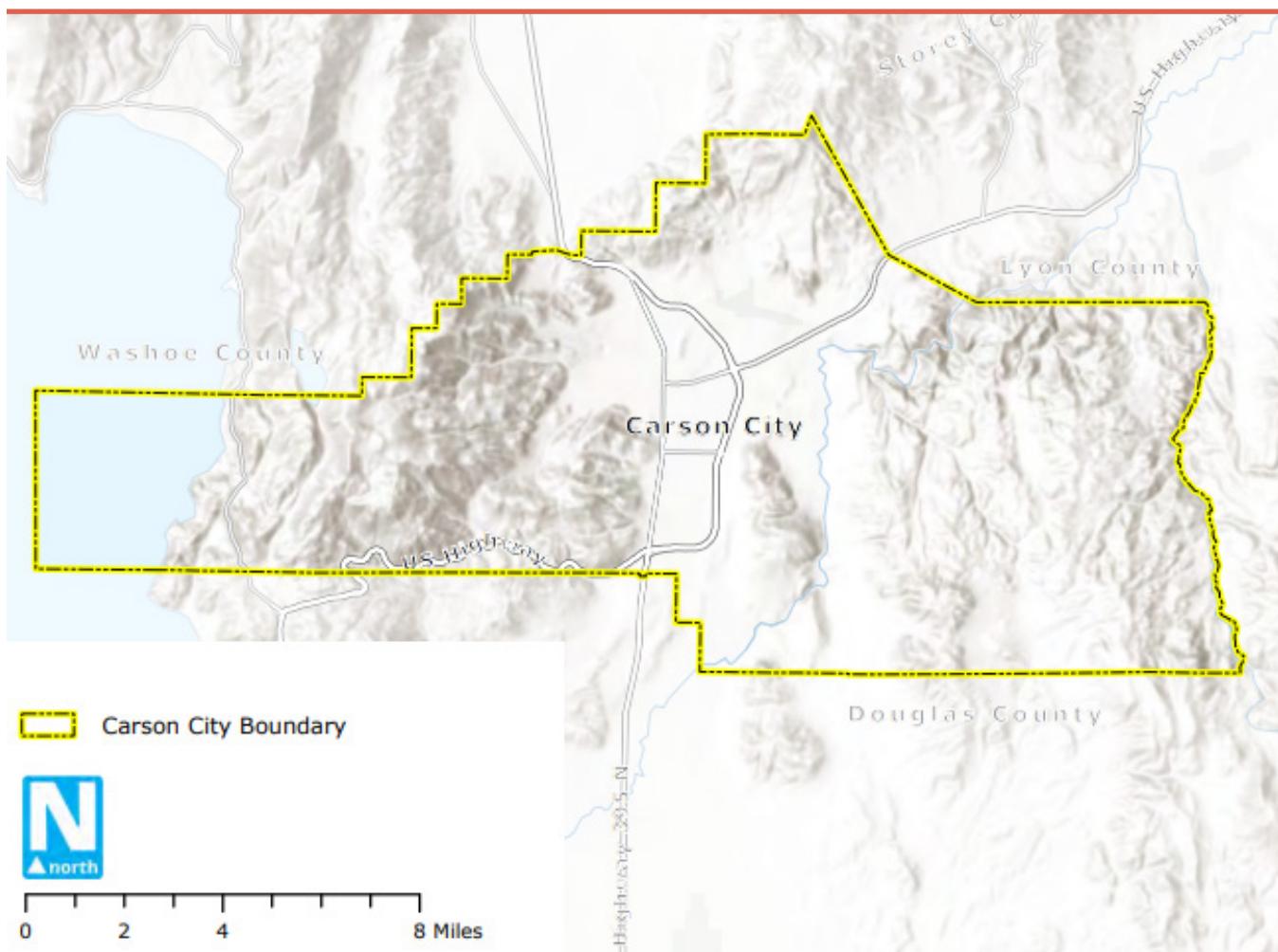
A Comprehensive Master Plan is a blueprint that provides guidance on where and how the community will grow in the next 20 years. Master plans typically consist of maps, policy statements, and goals addressing issues relating to growth, housing, economic development, transportation, natural resources, parks, recreation, pathways, open space, aesthetics, community character, and historic preservation.

The primary emphasis of the document is to provide long-range guidance to property owners, residents, and decision makers on land use issues, such as where residential, commercial, and industrial development should occur in the future, and at what densities.

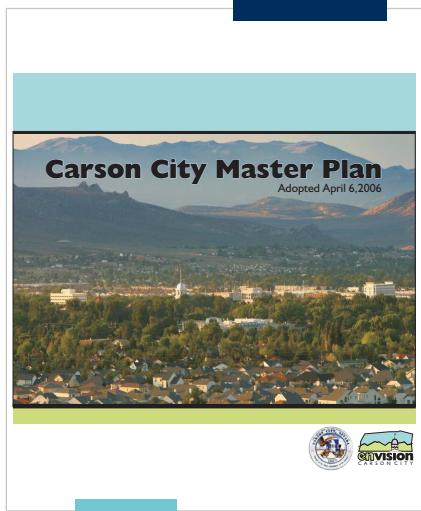
PLANNING AREA

Carson City is a consolidated city/county municipality encompassing 157.88 square miles (Source: Carson City GIS). Less than ten percent of the City's total land area is currently developed, primarily within the Eagle Valley, as nearly seventy-five percent of it is held by the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the State of Nevada. These publicly owned lands surround the urbanized area on three sides. Carson City abuts Washoe and Storey counties to the north, Douglas County to the south, Lyon County to the east, and Placer County to the west, along the Nevada/California border in Lake Tahoe. The westerly portion of Carson City, which lies within the Lake Tahoe basin, is also within the jurisdiction of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA).

Context Map



WHY UPDATE THE MASTER PLAN?



The first Carson City Master Plan was adopted in 1958. Since then, significant Master Plan updates have been adopted in 1977, 1978, 1983, 1996, and 2006. Over time there have been many changes in the community that affect its direction for the future. Transformative projects that were a focus of the 2006 Master Plan—like the Carson Freeway and associated capital improvements for Carson Street—are well underway and the community's demographics, land use patterns, housing needs, and economic conditions have shifted to reflect the rise of online shopping, remote work, and other national trends. Several objectives guided the development of this Master Plan. These objectives are outlined below and are addressed throughout the Master Plan document that follows this chapter.

Consultation with the community on their vision for the future.

The 2006 Master Plan was based on a vision statement and five broad themes—1) A Balanced Land Use Pattern; 2) Equitable Distribution of Recreational Opportunities; 3) Economic Vitality; 4) Livable Neighborhoods and Activity Centers; and 5) A Connected City. As part of the 2024 Master Plan update process, City staff and Planning Commission members hosted a series of Listening Sessions around the community. In total, 25 Listening Sessions were held and attended by nearly 400 participants. Listening Sessions were structured as informal discussions. Each meeting kicked off with a round of introductions, followed by a brief description of the Master Plan and Master Plan update process, and discussion about what participants like—or would like to change—about Carson City. Input received as part of the Listening Sessions confirmed that while these themes were still relevant, modifications were needed to reflect changes in the community's values and priorities since the early 2000s.

Chapter 2 outlines an updated vision statement and seven guiding principles to better emphasize community values and priorities that emerged as part of the Listening Sessions, as well as other community and stakeholder engagement. More information about the 2024 Master Plan update process can be found in Appendix C: Community Engagement Summary.

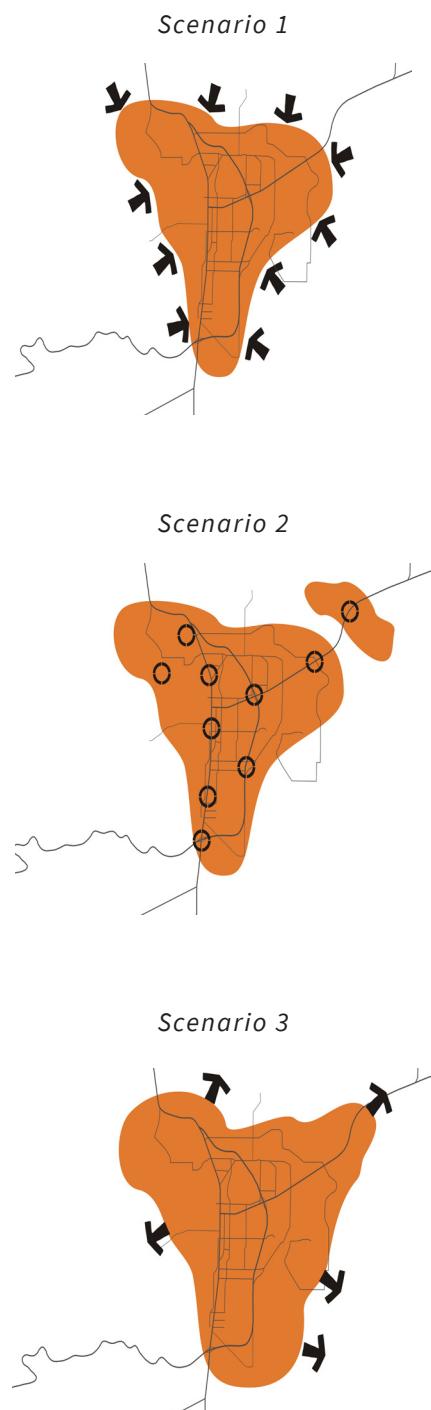


Confirm where and how the community should grow in the future.

Carson City has had a Growth Management Program in place since 1978 to help manage the rate of growth and to ensure adequate service levels and infrastructure capacity. As part of the 2006 Master Plan update process, the community's options for future growth were tested in the form of the three scenarios outlined below:

- **Scenario 1: Compact Urban Growth**—Under Scenario 1, it was assumed that a significant portion of future growth would be focused inward to vacant or underutilized areas within the City's existing “footprint.” New development at the urban fringe would be minimized and public lands surrounding the City would remain largely undisturbed, preserving hillsides and major community gateways.
- **Scenario 2: Mixed-Use Activity Centers**—Scenario 2 assumed that a significant amount of future development within the City would occur within strategically located activity centers containing a more diverse mix of land uses than is currently found in Carson City's developed areas.
- **Scenario 3: Urban Expansion**—Scenario 3 assumed that Carson City's existing land use types, densities, and basic development patterns would continue to expand in a manner similar to what existed within the community in the early 2000s. Most new development would occur on vacant lands at the periphery of the urbanized area and publicly owned lands suitable for urban development would be released to accommodate additional expansion.

Input received as part of the 2024 Master Plan update process reinforced the community's desire to maintain a compact urban footprint (as established through support of scenarios 1 and 2 in the 2006 Master Plan). To achieve this vision, this iteration of the Master Plan establishes an Urban Services Boundary (see map and definition in Chapter 3) to help clarify the limits of future urban development based on current water and sewer service plans. It also emphasizes the importance of planning to avoid and mitigate the impacts of natural and human-caused disasters by discouraging development in flood- and fire-prone areas and aligning with the goals of the Hazard Mitigation Plan. Participants in the Master Plan update supported mixed-use development as a tool to revitalize major gateway corridors and vacant or underutilized properties (see definitions of Growth Terminology in Chapter 3 Well-Managed Growth).



Recalibrate the Master Plan to Reflect Community Priorities

The 2024 Master Plan update was not intended as a “start-from-scratch” effort, but rather as an opportunity to review and modernize the 2006 Master Plan to reflect the needs of Carson City today—and for the future. In December 2023, members of the project team conducted over 50 interviews with Carson City residents, staff, department heads, elected officials, boards and commissions, partner agencies, community groups, and others with an interest or role in implementing the 2006 Master Plan. The purpose of the initial interviews was to help evaluate how well the 2006 Master Plan was serving Carson City’s needs, to identify areas where policy direction was lacking or needed to be clarified; and to identify specific opportunities for improvement. Interview results were summarized in the February 2024 Master Plan Assessment Appendix B: Master Plan Assessment, which highlighted the following areas of focus for the updated Master Plan:

- Deepen the community’s understanding of the factors that influence Carson City’s growth rate and ultimate buildout.
- Clarify future land use designations and policy direction for areas of transition.
- Expand revitalization and economic development focus along major corridors.
- Recalibrate mixed-use and non-residential land use designations to reflect the changing dynamics of retail and employment.
- Define housing needs and Carson City’s role in providing opportunities for diverse housing options.
- Reinforce Carson City’s commitment to environmental stewardship and community resilience.
- Strengthen/expand partnerships and leverage community assets.

Recommendations contained in the Master Plan Assessment were vetted and refined based on discussions with the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission in late January 2024, and further refined and explored with the broader community as part of the first round of community engagement in April 2024, and follow up work session with the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission in May 2024. Updates to the organization of the Master Plan and the goals and policies within the Master Plan were made to reinforce these areas of focus, as well as to acknowledge the results of the Listening Sessions.

HOW ARE THE GOALS AND POLICIES OF THE MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTED?

The Master Plan is a broad policy document used to articulate the community's vision for the future of Carson City and establish a guide for the physical development of the City. Many of the policies contained in the Master Plan are implemented through the day-to-day actions of City staff and elected and appointed officials. However, the Master Plan does not have the force of law as a regulation or ordinance for the enforcement of its goals and policies. Zoning maps and ordinances must be adopted to create the regulations and enforcement authority to implement the Master Plan. An Action Plan is included in Chapter 12 Action Plan of this document to provide a "roadmap" as to how the goals and policies should be implemented.

Implementation of the Master Plan will require consideration of the benefits and potential trade-offs of individual decisions within the context of the guiding principles and supporting goals and policies, personal property rights, and other factors. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors to determine which course of action best aligns with this Master Plan.



HOW DOES ZONING OF MY PROPERTY RELATE TO THE MASTER PLAN?

City zoning regulations consist of both a zoning map and a written ordinance that divides the City into zoning districts, including various residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed-use districts. The zoning regulations describe what type of land use and specific activities are permitted in each district, and regulate how buildings, signs, parking, and other features may be placed on a lot. The zoning regulations also provide procedures for re-zoning and other planning applications. The zoning map and zoning regulations provide the property "entitlements" to development, while the Master Plan provides a guide for the future development of the property. Proposed changes to the zoning of a particular property must be consistent with the Master Plan Land Use Map. That is to say, the Land Use Map contained in this Master Plan should guide future re-zoning decisions.

COMPLIANCE WITH NEVADA REVISED STATUTES

Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 278.150 through 278.170 states that a Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors (or governing body) shall prepare and adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the City. This Master Plan, which replaces the City's 2006 Plan, has been prepared and adopted in accordance with those statutes and shall be used in conjunction with other adopted plans (as referenced throughout this Master Plan) to guide growth and development within Carson City's jurisdiction.

NRS 278.0284 provides for consistency between the master plan and local ordinances as follows:

“Any action of a local government relating to development, zoning, the subdivision of land or capital improvements must conform to the master plan of the local government. In adopting any ordinance or regulation relating to development, zoning, the subdivision of land or capital improvements, the local government shall make a specific finding that the ordinance conforms to the master plan. Within one year after its adoption of any portion of a master plan, the local government shall review and, if necessary, amend its existing ordinances to ensure their conformity with the provisions of the master plan. If any provision of the master plan is inconsistent with any regulation relating to land development, the provision of the master plan governs any action taken in regard to an application for development.”

Although Carson City, due to its size, is not required to amend the zoning in one year, it will begin the conformity review upon adoption.

PLAN ORGANIZATION

The Master Plan is comprised of the following chapters in addition to this introductory chapter:



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Chapter 2 Vision and Guiding Principles—contains a statement of the community's vision for the future, along with an overview of the guiding principles which serve as a framework for the rest of the Plan.

Chapter 3 Well-Managed Growth—contains goals and policy statements pertaining to the community's desire for a compact urban footprint, a balanced land use pattern, the implementation of development practices that protect natural resources, plans to mitigate the City from natural and human-made disasters, and collaboration among local, state, tribal, and federal organizations.

Chapter 4 Access to Open Lands and Recreational Opportunities—contains goals and policy statements to reflect the broad objectives of the City's related Parks and Recreation and Open Space Master Plans and their role in the City's land use policy decisions.

**5**

Chapter 5 Economic Vitality—contains goals and policy statements pertaining to the City's commitment to a variety of economic development tools.

**6**

Chapter 6 Vibrant Gateway Corridors and Downtown—contains goals and policy statements to support the continued revitalization of downtown and key gateway corridors .

**7**

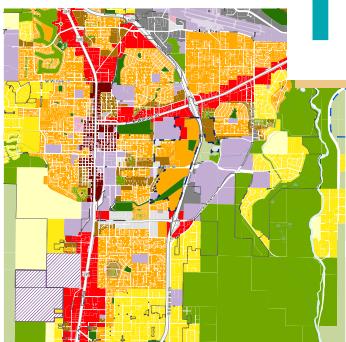
Chapter 7 Livable Neighborhoods—contains goals and policy statements pertaining to housing and the relationship between new developments and established neighborhoods.

**8**

Chapter 8 Unique History and Culture—contains goals and policy statements reflecting the community's desire to preserve historic and cultural resources and support the arts.

**9**

Chapter 9 A Connected City— contains goals and policy statements to reflect the broad objectives of the City's related Transportation, Transit, and Unified Pathways Master Plans and their role in the City's land use policy decisions.

**10**

Chapter 10 Land Use Plan— contains the Land Use Map, a description of land use categories used in the Plan, and detailed land use policies.



11



12

Chapter 11 Specific Plan Areas—contains specific policies pertaining to the three Specific Plan Areas identified on the Land Use Plan, including the Schulz Ranch (SR-SPA), Lompa Ranch (LR-SPA), and Eastern Portal—Virginia & Truckee Railway Gateway (V&T-SPA) Specific Plan Areas.

Chapter 12 Action Plan—contains a discussion of recommended priority actions to be taken to implement the Plan, as well as an Action Plan Matrix that assigns the priority and timing of recommended actions.

Appendices:

- **Appendix A: Background and Context**—Appendix A contains background data and contextual information that was used to inform the Master Plan—the Community Profile, the Projected Residential and Non-Residential Demand Methodology, and the Development Capacity Analysis.
- **Appendix B: Master Plan Assessment**—contains a summary of input received as part of initial interviews conducted as part of the 2024 Master Plan update and recommendations that informed the updated Master Plan.

- **Appendix C: Community Engagement Summary**—contains a summary of public input opportunities and steps taken to create the updated Master Plan.
- **Appendix D: State and National Register Properties**—contains a list of properties in Carson City that are listed on the State and/or National Register of Historic Places.

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